Statement: Crowding the Rim*

For three days, we have come together - 160 separate individuals from around the world, representing a broad variety of disciplines, organizations, and cultures, initially uncertain about the event but open to a new and productive experience. We depart as a group, sharing an extraordinary enthusiasm, energy, and spirit, committed to taking what we have learned and experienced back into the communities and institutions from which we have come. This transformation -- from separate individuals to active, engaged community -- reflects both the design of the event and the dedicated, open spirit each of us has brought to it. Now the question is how we can carry this spirit and intent back with us into our daily lives, and share it with others having similar concerns. We have some observations about what we have shared, and how we might continue this process into the future.

As a result of our work with an interactive game simulation, in which interdisciplinary groups of analysts engaged in post-disaster planning, we respect the difficulty of making long-range decisions in the face of limited information and complex, interwoven regional infrastructures--but gain confidence that it can be overcome. The exercise yielded some consensus themes that may be useful in real-world situations:

- establishing the primacy of regional over national objectives
- involving local people and reinforcing local capacity
- recognizing the priority of humanitarian purposes
- recognizing and accepting resource limitations
- reaching creative solutions by exploration outside the initial assumptions.

Information is essential to decision-making, but unless it is widely available and understood, it is useless. The Summit participants are committed to follow-up and outreach. We worked extensively with HAZPAC, the GIS database of geohazards, physiography, infrastructure and economic value around the Pacific Rim. Its availability on the Internet and in CD format will enable regions and communities to build on it, add their o own data, and increase its utility to others.

Encouraged by the results of our work, we are resolved to support follow-on initiatives. Initially, through a listserve of the participants, we will help to plan a series of workshops to disseminate these findings to people and organizations throughout the Pacific. We believe that our experience is a useful demonstration of how people of different disciplines, cultures, and national allegiances can work together successfully.

Another follow-on initiative will entail the distribution of the Interactive Education Module, developed around the Summit by teams of teachers and students, and designed to introduce students at all levels to the problems inherent in ripple-effect disasters.

*Crowding the Rim is an international, interdisciplinary public/private partnership established in May of 2000 by the American Red Cross, the Circum-Pacific Council, Stanford University and the United States Geological Survey. Its mission is to examine the impacts of ripple-effect disasters on nations of the Pacific Rim. These events result because of

rapid population growth around the Rim is converging with the hazard liability of a region characterized by tectonic plate collision and the consequent earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides, tsunamis, and fires. Such events, along with the typhoons ad flooding that also affect the area, can wreak havoc with the rapidly developing infrastructure - transpiration corridors, communication channels, and pipelines - on which 21st century life depends. In an increasingly global economy, local calamities quickly ripple out into international disasters. The Crowding the Rim Summit, held at Stanford University August 1-3, 2001, launched an ongoing program to analyze how such local events might reverberate through the Rim, and how these consequences could be identified and mitigated. The Summit brought together 160 diverse participants from various Rim nations--earth scientists, social scientists, government decision-makers, and various stakeholders--to develop a deepened and shared understanding of these challenges. They heard background lectures, engaged in an interactive game simulation with lifelike disaster scenarios, and debriefed in extensive small-group discussions about the lessons learned.